



Research Psychologist



Mary Kaiser
Research Psychologist

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I work on research programs looking at how humans interact with aerospace systems. I find ways to improve human performance and minimize error, and I look at how to design machines that are comfortable for people to use.

Areas of expertise:

- Human visual perception

How I first became interested in this profession:

I have always been interested in what makes people "tick," and how we learn to cope with, and to understand the world around us. I started out by studying developmental research, but when a college professor told me that NASA had human factors research, that's when I decided to work here.

What helped prepare me for this job:

Understanding the right methods and tools needed to study human behavior helped me a lot.

My role models or inspirations:

When I was a kid, the astronauts were all heroes. Every launch was televised. It was a different era. My biggest inspirations, however, are the scientists and engineers, who work tirelessly to make the space program a success.

My education and training:

- Ph.D. in Psychology, University of Virginia
- B.A. in Biology, University of Virginia
- B.A. in English, University of Virginia

My career path:

- 15 years as a research psychologist at NASA Ames

What I like about my job:

I like the people I work with, as much as the work we do together solving problems as a team. NASA is very dedicated to exploring possibilities and meeting challenges, and it's willing to lead by testing new and bold ideas. Long ago, Greek philosophers wanted to understand human perception. Today we have the tools to make interesting discoveries, making these exciting times to be a research psychologist.

What I don't like about my job:

I have endless piles of paperwork to do! I need to document all the measurements and data, which takes up a lot of time.

My advice to anyone interested in this occupation:

There are many branches of Psychology. It may take a while to figure out what you're most interested in. A strong background in math leaves a lot of possibilities open, so it is a good idea to take a lot of math classes. Talk to different people in this profession to find out what they do in their line of work.